



Roddons attends royal occasion  
**Page 3**



Roddons' new Grounds Maintenance Contractor meets residents  
**Page 4**



Training  
**Page 7**

## Quaker Way Improvements Celebration



Residents at Quaker Way, Chatteris were delighted to celebrate the completion of improvement works to their sheltered scheme on 6th May 2011.

Working with Roddons staff, residents designed the refurbishment of the communal lounge which included a new entrance

porch and a redecorated lounge with fitting of new carpets and furniture. Also, the works included providing a new shower, a disabled toilet, a refitted kitchen and a remodelled guest room.

The residents have patiently waited for their promised improvements and attended a number of consultation meetings with Roddons

staff to discuss and agree the details of the work. The project was delivered by Roddons Direct Labour Organisation working in partnership with Apollo. Residents all agreed that the quality of the finished work was very impressive.

Christopher Smith formally opened the lounge and stated:

*"We are delighted to have completed this project for residents, to their specification and on time. Everyone is thrilled with the result and we hope this facility will serve the residents of Quaker Way and the surrounding community for many years to come."*

Mrs Lemmon, resident of Quaker Way, said: "The

improvements are lovely. It will make a nice place to hold our functions and be able to invite other sheltered scheme residents to join us."

Mrs Knuth, also a resident of Quaker Way, said: "I think it's great, and you've done us justice. The celebration was the icing on the cake."

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2. Press red;
3. Enter the quickcode: 'C' (2)

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sky



## Circle news at the touch of a button!

Circle Digital is a new, easy way to access your landlord and local services, using Virgin or Sky TV, mobile phone, Nintendo Wii or PC. From checking out local events, reporting repairs, looking up bus times to booking a doctor's appointment - Circle Digital gives you more choice in how you contact us.

You can find information from your landlord, such as:

- repairs information and reporting
- anti-social behaviour advice and reporting
- home improvements and adaptations
- home ownership and transfer options
- news
- how to get involved
- rent and benefits advice

You'll also find local area information, such as:

- Jobcentre searches
- GP and NHS services
- Travel information
- Choice-based lettings

Additional services will be added so be sure to keep an eye on it.

**Want to know more? Contact your landlord to find out more about the great new interactive service.**



# Contents

- 3** Roddons attends royal occasion
- 4** Roddons' new Grounds Maintenance Contractor meets residents
- 5** News from RASP
- 6** Residents review repairs service
- 7** Resident Scrutiny Panel – Update
- 8** Performance figures

## NOTE FROM EDITOR



Hello and welcome to the Summer edition of Home Matters.

We have been working hard over the past few months to ensure that you are receiving Home Matters in the format that you want, whether it's in large print or audio we can provide this.

If you do require this newsletter in a different format please let us know by emailing [residentcomms@circle.org.uk](mailto:residentcomms@circle.org.uk) or write to Marketing Communications Team, Circle Housing Group, 6 Central Avenue, St Andrews Business Park, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 0HR.

If you wish to opt out of receiving this newsletter in paper format and receive it via email instead simply log on to [www.circle.org.uk/optout](http://www.circle.org.uk/optout) and fill in the short form.



## Resident volunteers their time to help others

As part of the "Get Digital Scheme", which has been launched to help people get online, Roddons was successful in gaining funding for computers at Fleming Court, March and Quinion Close, Whittlesey. A bid was completed to gain this funding and the new computers have been installed at both of these schemes and basic training provided. We have been working in partnership with Cambridge Housing Society (CHS) to provide basic computer training for residents and the wider community, over a period of five weeks.

Resident Mandy Jarvis, who became involved only last year, has undertaken

personal development by volunteering to be a mentor for other residents. Mandy runs the sessions in her own time to give the residents support and confidence to improve their computer skills. The training and support from Mandy has supported Roddons' mission of 'Enhancing Life Chances'.

Mandy is really enjoying this opportunity and has now enrolled in a Learn Direct Computer Course to gain knowledge and skills to develop herself even further. Tara Howlett, Scheme Manager, commented: "Mandy has really built up her confidence and the residents really like her."

## Gas safety



It is important to us to make sure our residents are safe. Under UK law we must carry out a service and landlord's inspection every year (within 12 months of the previous inspection) on any gas, oil, and solid fuel appliances in your home. It is also the law that you allow us into your home to carry out these safety tests. Stopping us coming in to your home to carry out these tests is a breach of your tenancy agreement and may result in legal proceedings if we

are unable to check your appliances.

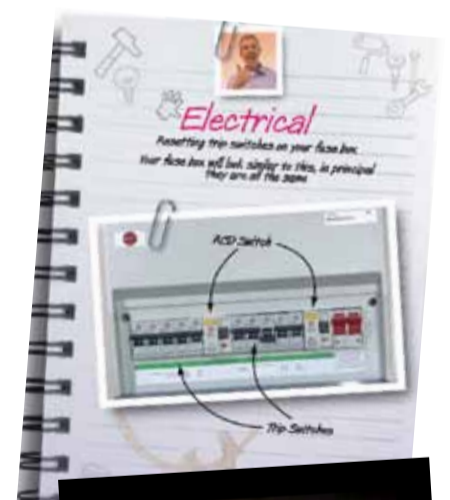
Therefore we ask for your ongoing support in completing these important safety tests.

### Ensuring your safety

All operatives carry identity badges that include a picture, licence number, company name and expiry date on the front. If you wish to check that someone is an engineer then call GAS SAFE on 0800 408 5500.

## Roddons Supports Community Event in March, Cambridgeshire

### Roddons staff take part in the March Festival.



Check out our website at [www.circle.org.uk/roddons](http://www.circle.org.uk/roddons) for our latest videos which offer some top tips on saving energy and home repairs.

## Roddons attend **royal occasion**

Roddons attended a royal occasion where Princess Anne officially opened the new Education Centre and library at the birthplace Museum of Octavia Hill. Born in 1838, Octavia Hill was the fore-runner of affordable social housing and co-founder of the National Trust and spent her life trying to improve the lives of ordinary people.



**R**oddons is keen to support this link between the past and present and has funded a photographic festival at the museum, as well as sponsoring seven information boards for inside the building.

A large amount of funding

including Heritage Lottery and European Funding has enabled the original museum, established in 1994, to grow and spread over five buildings. As well as a number of rooms displaying the life and work of Octavia Hill, it also incorporates a garden, gift shop, tea-room, starter

offices, meeting rooms, the Education Centre and library.

During her visit, the Princess Royal was given a guided tour by Peter Clayton, Chairman of the Octavia Hill Birthplace Museum Trust, and met the trustees and volunteers who run the project.

Community and Projects Officer, Wendy Coles, who was introduced to the Princess, said: "The Princess Royal asked where our stock was and seemed very knowledgeable and interested about social housing in general. Not many housing associations can boast such a strong link with

*the foundations of social housing and we want to build on that. Octavia Hill believed that better places to live means improving the communities people live in and this is something that Roddons is passionate about."*



## Rodsons' new Grounds Maintenance Contractor meets residents

Members of the Tenancy and Estate Management Tenants Advisory Group (TAG) met with our new Grounds Maintenance Contractor, The Landscape Group (TLG) who welcomed the TAG to their depot, at The Base in Melbourn Avenue, March. The group were welcomed

by Nick Temple-Heald, Chief Executive of TLG, who gave an introduction to TLG and a presentation on how composting is dealt with at the site.

Andy Griffiths, Contracts Manager, explained how the team is set up to deal with the grass cutting, hedge cutting and general

grounds maintenance of Rodsons' landscaped areas. The landscaping operatives have been given additional training, with processes and supervision in place, including regular team meetings. New equipment has been purchased to help the operatives provide an improved level of service, particularly on

sheltered schemes.

Feedback from residents at the meeting agreed so far the schemes are looking good; Andy said: "TLG are keen to receive feedback from residents on how the service is being delivered." Where concerns have been raised, Andy has responded to these personally, visiting

the area in question and providing direct feedback on how things will be put right. At a meeting for residents of Kennedy Court, Andy's response to residents was read out; they were very happy with the way the matter is being dealt with and said that it was an excellent response.

## New development named by resident

We have taken handover of another 24 new homes on the Mizzen Place development in Chatteris. The new homes contribute to meeting the promises and our mission of 'Enhancing Life Chances' of residents in Fenland.

The development of 12 one bedroom flats and 12 two bedroom flats was launched at an event held to celebrate the completion of the scheme on 6th May 2011. In recent years, the site was the location of an unsightly 1980s

office building that was demolished to make way for the new development.

The scheme was designed to have a link with the much earlier docks that stood at what is now the junction of Bridge Street and Dock Road. A competition was held to suggest names for the development; the winning name was chosen by Stan Collins, who was presented with vouchers for coming up with the successful choice.

Mr Collins commented: "My overall view of the development was that it

looked very clean and tidy and I was impressed with the energy saving features. Overall a very good scheme and a good day at the handover."

The marine theme continued, with the completed blocks being named Compass House, Sextant House and Quayside House. The homes were all delivered to the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3, which will help residents save on fuel bills, and water saving measures to reduce water consumption in the homes.



The event was also attended by resident Sophie Tyrell who moved into a one bedroom flat. Speaking about her new home, Sophie said: "I am very happy in my new home. The place is lovely and clean and looks fresh and was ready for me to move straight in."

Darren Blake, Development Manager said: "It has been a challenging and very rewarding development to deliver for our residents and it brings a great sense of satisfaction in being here to see the completed scheme launch."

## News from the Resident and Service Users Panel



Circle's Residents and Service Users Panel (RASP) have been busy over the last few months. We don't just meet once a quarter, we all try to participate in the development of Circle's policies and practices in other events between our formal meetings.

Many members have been involved in the review of the repairs and maintenance service, which is of course one of the main contacts that residents have with Circle. Our members have attended two large events where the details of the service have been discussed and some have participated in smaller groups going over the fine detail of what is involved in the service – improving the service where it is needed and building on the best practices across the whole of Circle.

RASP members' knowledge of residents' experience of how repairs and maintenance are carried out in every part of the country where Circle has properties has been a

useful addition to this review.

RASP is unique in that it involves people from across the whole of Circle but we are also busily trying to make sure that we all know about other parts of the group, beyond where we happen to live. For that reason we've started on a programme of visits to all of the areas where Circle provides housing and services, to look around and get a feel for the special conditions in each area.

We've been to Mole Valley in Surrey and most recently visited the Mercian Housing Association in the West Midlands. We spent the day looking at the very varied housing that Mercian provides. From a scheme aimed at young people who have been

previously homeless to a very impressive sheltered housing scheme – with plenty in between.

We discussed the difficulties of funding new housing provision in the current climate and many other questions facing the housing sector at the moment. I think all the RASP members learnt a lot from that day and are looking forward to future visits.

Our next formal meeting is in September but before that RASP members will be involved in a range of events so that we can make sure the views of residents and service users are heard in every part of Circle.

Alison Hill  
RASP chair

## Leaseholders and Shared Owners



### Help us improve our service to you!



We may have contacted you recently asking you to complete an Equality and Diversity Form. If not, we will be contacting you shortly. This helps us to collect information including our customers' race, disability and communication needs.

### Why is it important that we collect this information?

At Circle, our mission is to enhance the life chances of our residents. Each question we ask is equally important. We want to make sure that our services are being provided fairly and that we are not discriminating against any groups or individuals. Your answers will also help shape the services we provide to you.

In addition, these questionnaires will ensure that we have the most up to date ways of contacting you.

We understand that some of the questions are more sensitive than others. If there are certain questions you do not wish to answer, you can fill in the rest of the questionnaire and choose the 'prefer not to say' option.

You can provide your Equality and Diversity information via post, over the telephone, by email or in person. In all cases the information will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and a privacy statement will be sent to you.

Over the next 12 months we will be focussing on collecting this data and appreciate your assistance with this.

If you require any further information on this process, please do not hesitate to contact the Team using the number below:

Tel: 0845 056 8070

# Residents review repairs service

Listening to what customers want, convenient appointment slots and being kept updated about contractor arrival times were just some of the issues on the agenda at two customer engagement events to discuss our repairs and maintenance service.



The workshops, which were organised as part of a major review of our repairs and maintenance service, brought together customers from across the Group to discuss what they thought were the key things that made up a great service.

We recently carried out some in-depth customer research which helped us to identify a number of service areas we need to look at and improve. As part of that process we have been reviewing everything about our repairs and maintenance service; from the way we fix small problems, to how we

look after the overall quality of your homes.

Gary Wilkinson, who has been leading the review said: *“The people best placed to tell us what works, what doesn’t and what we could do better, is our customers. That’s why they are playing an important part of this review. As one customer who attended the events put it ‘nobody knows your homes like we do, we are living in them.’ Exactly right.*

*“These customer workshops have been really interesting and given us plenty to think about. One of the issues that comes up time and time again is communication. For example, people said being kept informed about expected contractor arrival times and listening to what the customer wants was important.*

*“That’s good to know, because listening is exactly what we are doing.”*

Details about the outcome of the review will be published on our website in the summer and in the next edition of Home Matters.

## Managing Director ‘back to the floor’ in sheltered housing



Managing Director, Christopher Smith, took an opportunity to visit the residents and Scheme Manager, Rebecca Parlett, at Bradshaw Court, in March. He was able to join a scheme coffee morning in the lounge and answer questions from, and chat with residents.

Christopher also accompanied Rebecca on her daily personal visits to the residents at Bradshaw Court and Springfield Avenue. This is one of the most important tasks for the Scheme Manager as it ensures each resident is safe and sound, and provides them with an opportunity to raise any issues or concerns they may have.

Christopher said: *“It was great to spend time with Rebecca, both in order to see the day-to-day realities of her job and to meet many of the residents and get feedback on how Roddons and the services we provide are viewed. It really came home to me just how valued our Scheme Managers are by the residents in our sheltered housing and that we need to support them as much as we possibly can in carrying out the vital role they have.”*

Rebecca commented: *“It was so nice to have Christopher job shadow me and meet the residents here, they really felt honoured that Christopher had the time to visit and listen to their views about the services we provide.”*

## Race for Life



In June Roddons staff, together with friends and family, participated in the Peterborough Race for Life, raising over £500 in aid of Breast Cancer Research. The Roddons’ girls, all in fancy dress, walked and ran their five miles in under one hour. The jolly group organised the event to celebrate the positive spirit of their much loved colleague Liz Elliott who was diagnosed with Breast Cancer in January this year.

Liz said: *“The staff at Roddons and especially the Customer Service Team, have been very understanding, encouraging and supportive towards me whilst battling with chemotherapy. Taking part in the Race for Life is another great way of the staff showing*

*their support for myself and others fighting cancer and helping to find a cure for it. I am about to start the next stage in fighting this and have surgery coming up soon. It’s good to know that all the staff will continue to be encouraging and supportive towards me and sending regular well wishes. Thank you to everyone.”*

Debby Bunn, Head of Customer Services for Roddons, said: *“We are all really inspired by Liz and it’s great to see so many of us here for a worthy cause. Cancer affects so many people and everyone can do something to help. When someone close to you is diagnosed with cancer it’s devastating for everyone involved. A massive thank you to everyone who contributed.”*

## Resident Scrutiny Panel



UPDATE

As per the last edition of Home Matters, the work of our Resident Scrutiny Panel continues.

RSP member Irene Henson commented: "We are from diverse backgrounds with a broad spectrum of knowledge, which we are enhancing by undertaking Accredited Training, in conjunction with our Service Area reviews. We work well as a team and with members of staff, and we analyse ways forward to enhance service provision, tenant aspirations and the day-to-day running of Roddons."

The second project is focusing on Aids and Adaptations and is nearing completion, a report will go to the Board shortly with the Panel's findings.

John Feary said: "Being an RSP member is very interesting and certainly gets the little grey cells

working overtime. When we completed our first review it was presented to the Board and was well received. This made me very nervous giving the presentation, but now I have the confidence I would definitely do this again."

One of the original members of the RSP, Annette Bernsmeier, has had to step down for personal reasons. The RSP members would like to thank Annette for her commitment in the past and wish her well for the future.

### The RSP are looking for new members.

#### What do you need to become a member?

- Time to commit to regular meetings and training sessions
- Time and ability to read large documents and make constructive comments

- Willing to learn the necessary skills and expand on your knowledge
- Work in partnership with Roddons and their staff
- Team working
- Ability to listen and take into consideration others opinions
- Understanding of Equality & Diversity

#### What can you expect to receive from Roddons?

- Support from staff and RSP members
- Consultant's support, advice and guidance
- Training including accredited training
- Expenses including travel
- Supply of stationery etc
- Visits to other Scrutiny Panels and networking sessions

If you feel that you have the necessary skills, experience and can give a commitment then contact Sally Taylor for an application pack. Landline 0800 111 6447 or mobile 0300 333 6557



Photo shows an Equality & Diversity workshop which was attended by a wide range of age groups

## Training

FREE

Training can be fun and Roddons are committed to providing appropriate training for its residents and the wider community and best of all, all training is **FREE**.

### How does Roddons know what training is needed?

At the end of each year involved residents are sent a training skills audit form to complete, in order to assess what training is needed the most for the forthcoming year.

### The training programme starting August 2011:

#### Equality & Diversity Workshop

Boat House, Wisbech on 23 August 9.30am to 12.30pm

#### Food Safety CIEH Level 2

Octavia Hill House, Wisbech on Tuesday 4 October 9.30am to 4.30pm

#### First Aid at Work HSE approved

Octavia Hill House, Wisbech on Tuesday 8 November 9.30 am to 4.30 pm

#### Customer Service Skills

Octavia Hill House, Wisbech on Tuesday 29 November 9.30am to 4.30pm

**Healthy Eating courses** are being held at sheltered schemes at Quaker Way, Chatteris and Fleming Court, March. Contact the Resident Involvement Team for details.

#### Arts Awards Accredited training with Fenland Arts. Age Group 9 – 25

Starting in September

3 Categories: Bronze, Silver and Gold

Gain skills to organise, promote and present an event to Roddons Sheltered Scheme residents in December.

#### Intermediate Computer Skills Workshops

Dates and venues to be confirmed

To avoid disappointment (due to limited spaces) please ring the Resident Involvement Team: Sally or Jackie to book a place. Landline 0800 111 6447 or Mobile 0300 333 6557.

#### WANT TO JOIN THE YOUTH GROUP?

For further information contact Sally Taylor at Roddons on 0300 333 6557.

## What's On – dates for your diaries...



Every Thursday morning **Drop In Session** in the **Tenants Resource Centre at Roddons offices in March (opposite TESCO)**. Come along and have a chat and a **FREE cuppa** to see what is going on in your area... **Everyone Welcome**

Fleming Court Sheltered Scheme in March hold a knitting and craft 'get together' every Thursday afternoon at 2 pm. Everyone welcome.

### August 2011

- 8 – Wisbech Association – 10am – Onyx Court
- 8 – March Association – 2pm – Fleming Court
- 9 – Youth Group meeting – 10.30am – Roddons offices, March
- 17 – Whittlesey Chatting Café – 10.30am – Library
- 18 – Thorney Toll Association – 7.30pm – Village Hall
- 18 – Benwick Association – 7.30pm – Village Hall
- 19 – Trip to Great Yarmouth – organised by Youth Group, March & Chatteris Associations
- 22 – Wisbech St Mary Chatting Café – 10.30am – Bridge Inn
- 22 – Wisbech Chatting Cafe – 2-3 pm – Rosmini Cafe

### September 2011

- 12 – Wisbech Association – 10am – Onyx Court
  - 12 – March Association – 7pm – Bradshaw Court
  - 15 – Thorney Toll Association – 7.30pm – Village Hall
  - 15 – Benwick Association – 7.30pm – Village Hall
  - 20 – Youth Group meeting – 4pm – Roddons Offices, March
  - 21 – Whittlesey Chatting Café – 10.30am – Library
  - 22 – Murrow Chatting Cafe – 3pm – Church Hall
  - 26 – Chatteris Association AGM – 10.30am – Library
  - 26 – Wisbech Chatting Cafe – 2-3 pm – Rosmini Cafe
  - 27 – Benwick Chatting Café – 11 am – Village Hall
- Start of Art Award sessions (8) for youth (aged 11 - 18) – any youths can attend.

### October 2011

- 5 – Sheltered Forum – 10am, venue to be confirmed
- 10 – Wisbech Association – 10am – Onyx Court
- 10 – March Association – 2pm – Morton Avenue
- 12 – Whittlesey Association AGM – 3pm – St Mary's House
- 13 – Thorney Toll Association – 7.30pm – Village Hall
- 17 – Wisbech St Mary Chatting Café – 10.30am – Bridge Inn
- 18 – Youth Group meeting – 4pm – Roddons offices, March
- 19 – Whittlesey Chatting Café – 10.30am – Library
- 20 – Benwick Association – 7.30pm – Village Hall

Would you like to attend an event or Chatting Café in your area? Want to join the Youth Group? For further information on any of the above contact Sally or Jackie in the Resident Involvement Team on Landline 0800 111 6447 / Mobile 0300 333 6557

## How are we doing?

Performance April 2010 – March 2011

Performance Area	April 09 – March 10	April 10 March 11	How are we doing?	Target
Emergency repairs completed on target (24 hours)	97.9%	95.1%		98%
Urgent repairs completed on target (7 days)	95.2%	94.7%		97%
Routine repairs completed on target (28 days)	81.4%	96.6%		94%
Tenants that were satisfied with repairs and maintenance	92.8%	96.9%		91%

We have reviewed the way we plan routine repair orders to work more efficiently. This has resulted in a significant improvement in service delivery and customer satisfaction. The adverse winter weather conditions put tremendous pressure on our delivery of Urgent and Emergency Repairs during December and January. The team put in considerable effort throughout these months and made a good recovery in February and March that is reflected in our overall year end position.

Average number of days taken to re-let a <i>General Needs</i> property	19 days	16.4 days		19 days
Average number of days taken to re-let a <i>Supported Housing</i> property	31 days	18.1 days		35 days
The number of vacant homes ( <i>General Needs</i> )	0.6%	0.6%		0.6%
The number of vacant homes ( <i>Supported Housing</i> )	5.8%	12.8%		15.0%

This is a fantastic achievement to finish the year with all Void KPI's on target. Whilst re-let speed has consistently improved throughout 2010/11; in 2011/12 we will be focussing on how we can improve the experience of moving to a Roddons home for the customer.

The amount of rent & service charge collected ( <i>General Needs</i> )	101.1%	100.5%		100%
The amount of rent & service charge collected ( <i>Supported Housing</i> )	101.8%	99.7%		100%
Total amount of current tenant arrears ( <i>General Needs</i> )	2.4%	1.7%		3.5%
Total amount of current tenant arrears ( <i>Supported Housing</i> )	0.4%	0.3%		1.6%

Performance on rent arrears is amongst the very best within the Circle Group. The extra income means that Roddons can invest more money for repairs and for service improvements.

### How we are doing – Key to symbols



Good



Improving



Needs to improve

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